The Carissa Mine
South Pass City Access Road at the junction
to Atlantic City, .65 miles northeast of
South Pass City
South Pass City Vicinity
Fremont County
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-30

HABS
WYO,
7-SOPAC,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20005

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. WYO-30

THE CARISSA MINE

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WYO,
7-SOPAC,
3-

Location: South Pass City Access Road at the junction to Atlantic City, .65 miles northeast of South Pass City, Fremont County, Wyoming.
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS South Pass City Quadrangle Map) 12.681420.4704540.

Present Owner: G. B. Colemere, President of the Pioneer Carissa Gold Mine, Inc.

Present Use: There is no gold mining work being done at the mine at this time.

Statement of Significance: The discovery of gold at the site of the Carissa Mine led to the founding of South Pass City. The Carissa Mine was the most productive of the South Pass City area mines and was closely connected with the economic rise and fall of South Pass City.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: In 1873 the original hoist house burned. Although it is not certain, the present hoist house may date from that time. During the 1901-1906 period of mining activity several of the present buildings were built. Research to date has not revealed specific dates for any of the remaining buildings.

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Carissa (Careso) Mine was discovered in 1865 by Tom Ryan. On June 22, 1867 fourteen men, Henry Reedall, E. T. Marshall, Joshua Terry, Noyes Baldwin, P. E. Van Crelin, William Davis, Martin Keplinger, Levi Curtis, D. D. Dibble, Richard Grace, and E. B. Eddy registered the claim.

In 1868, the mine came into the hands of The Thurmond Company. A year later the mine was owned by Thomas Roberts who travelled to London, England to interest an English Company in ownership of the mine. The English businessmen are reported to have agreed

to purchase the mine for $115,000 of which they only paid $15,000. By 1873 the Carissa Mine lay idle.

In 1877, the ownership of the mine was obtained by Bolivar Roberts. Roberts took out a patent on the land in 1889 from the United States government. In 1899, the Carissa Gold Mining Co. under Roberts sold the mine to John C. Spry, president of the Federal Gold Mining Company. John Spry's heirs, through the Federal Gold Mining Company, sold the mine to the Midwest Mines Corporation in 1928. The owners of the Carissa Mine failed to pay the promised wages to its workers and soon it was placed in receivership. By court order, Barney Tibbals received a deed for the mine from special master, Dean Sprigg, in 1933. Barney Tibbals then sold the mine to John J. Sprigg in 1933. Barney Tibbals and John Sprigg took legal action against Marshall Graham, (who was the acting receiver for the Carissa Mine in 1934) to obtain title to the mine. In 1934, Tibbals and Sprigg sold the mine to the American Smelting and Refining Company. Meanwhile Graham sold the mine to M. C. Amyx and H. M. Slooth in 1936 and had it recorded in 1938. At this point, Charles Cole, County Treasurer of Fremont County, issued a tax deed against the mine in 1938. In 1941, the courts turned the mine over to Ray Towers, who in 1951 transferred the property to the Mica Mountain Mines, Inc. of Salt Lake City, Utah. By July of 1951, this company had sold the property to the Pioneer Carissa Gold Mine, Inc.

Meanwhile in 1950, Rollin Keyes, Gladys Spry, and Morris Wilson, all heirs of John Spry, sold their interest in the Carissa Mine to John Sprigg. In 1956, H. H. Hime, who was acting as the receiver for the mine, sold the Carissa to the Rocket Mining Corporation. This Corporation sold the mine to the Pioneer Carissa Gold Mine, Inc. in 1960. In 1963, the Pioneer Carissa Gold Mine, Inc. sold the Carissa to G. B. Colemere. John J. Sprigg gave his ownership in the mine to Dean Sprigg in 1971 and James Sprigg gave his ownership to Joseph Spriggs. The question of whether the Carissa Mine belongs to Sprigg or Colemere was finally decided in favor of G. B. Colemere.

4. Alterations and additions: In 1873 the original hoist house of the Carissa Mine was burned down and a new hoist house was built along with a conveyor shed leading to the stamp mills. In 1901 the shaft was sunk to 300 feet and somewhat later to 387 feet. In 1905 new machinery was placed in the mine along with a cyanide mill. In 1946 a new cyanide mill with a rated capacity of 100 tons a day was constructed. In 1950 further work was done on the hoist house.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

In 1865 Tom Ryan, a soldier in the Nevada Volunteers, passed through the South Pass vicinity and made the original discovery of the Carissa Lode. He reported his findings in Salt Lake City, but before he could return to the site Henry Reedall and thirteen others had registered the claim on June 22, 1867.

During July of 1867 a group of Sioux Indians attacked the miners as they worked at the Carissa mine sinking a shaft. Captain J. W. Lawrence rallied the miners and attempted to make a stand using picks and shovels as weapons. In the ensuing fight Lawrence was killed and the remaining miners fled to Willow Creek, following it to the Sweetwater River. There the miners launched a successful counter attack which dispersed their Indian pursuers. The Indians did take the tools and goods which the miners had been forced to abandon at the mine when they fled. Despite this set back, the miners returned to work and by the spring of 1868 they had extracted $15,000 worth of gold from the Carissa Mine. Tales of the riches of the Carissa Mine brought a rush of miners to the region and lead to the establishment of South Pass City.

The boom at the Carissa Mine lasted until 1873 when it fell idle and most of the other mines in the area were abandoned. The surface ore in the area was rich, but the value of the ore decreased with the depth of the mine. In 1901 a new shaft was sunk to 300 feet. The recorded production of the mine during the 1902-1906 period was about "2,800 tons of ore that returned a total in gold and silver of somewhat more than $25,000." (Armstrong, p. 44.) During the years following the 1906 period no mining was done although for several years the mine was pumped so that water would not obstruct examination of the mine. At that time the shaft was about 387 feet deep and workings extended along a 750 foot vein. There were five levels and nearly 2,600 feet of horizontal workings were located beneath the first level. (Armstrong, p. 44.)

About 1932 the American Smelting and Refining Company unwatered the mine and took samples but did no further work. A few moderate shoots of medium grade ore were identified at that time. However, because title to the mine was not clear, no further action was taken until 1946 when Mica Mountain Mining Company of Salt Lake City, Utah re-opened the mine, under the direction of Ray Tower. (Armstrong, p. 44.)

In August 1946 the surface and second and third levels of the mine were mapped and sampled. By March 1947, 30 tons a day were being mined at an average of just under $12 a ton. A clean high-grade

concentrate averaging 20 ounces of gold per ton was made in the jig. In May 1947 it was reported that the mine had increased its overall recovery rate to 93%. (Armstrong, p. 45.)

From an evaluation of the mine's old workings and the statements of old-timers in the district regarding the high grade quality of the oxidized ore, the Carissa Mine probably produced between $100,000 and $500,000 during its years of peak production. (Armstrong, pp. 45-46.)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Photographic file, Wyoming Recreation Commission, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Bartlett, Albert B., former state geologist and a former member of the Wyoming Planning and Water Conservation Board, interview in Cheyenne, Wyoming on May 31, 1973.

Fremont County, Abstract of Titles for Township 29, Fremont County Courthouse; Laramie, Wyoming.

Shaffer, Thomas, planner for the Wyoming Recreation Commission; interview in Cheyenne, Wyoming on June 19, 1973.

Files on South Pass City, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Research Department; Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Trevor, Marjorie C., "History of Carter-Sweetwater County, Wyoming to 1875." Master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1954.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Armstrong, Frank C. "Preliminary Report on the Geology of the Atlantic City-South Pass Mining District," undated manuscript. Copy at the Wyoming Recreation Commission.

Bartlett, Albert B. Atlantic City, South Pass Gold Mining District. State of Wyoming Geologist's Office, Bulletin, No. 20, July 15, 1926

Hayden, F. V. United States Geological Survey of Wyoming. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1873.

Prepared by John Paige
Project Historian
National Park Service
Summer, 1973
and Candace Reed
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
Summer, 1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The buildings still extant at the site of the Carissa Mine comprise the most complete grouping of simple frontier and early twentieth century mining structures still standing in the South Pass Historic Mining District (Sweetwater Gold Mine Field).

2. Condition of fabric: The hoist house is rapidly deteriorating. The remaining buildings in the complex, which include the machine shed next to the hoist house, the smelter and the conveyor shed connecting the hoist house and smelter are in good condition structurally, but show evidence of surface deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The mine has four rectangular buildings. The hoist house is approximately 25' x 35'. The adjacent machine shed is approximately 40' x 25'. The smelter is approximately 100' x 100' in four sections which step down the hillside. The conveyor shed which connects the hoist house and smelter is approximately eight feet wide and is built in two sections, each of which is approximately 100 feet long with a machine room at the midpoint junction.

2. Foundations: Local red slate shist.

3. Structural system, framing: All structures have a heavy timber framing system with the smelter framing being of dimensioned lumber and the remaining structures being of unfinished lodgepole pine logs. The conveyor shed is supported on log tressles

at the smelter end where it is approximately 15 feet above grade.

4. Porches, stoops: There are three docks on the northwest side and one dock on the southeast side of the smelter. Because of the hillside location they are each at a different elevation.

5. Chimneys: There are a number of metal flues on the roofs of the smelter.

6. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: Exterior wooden doors are vertical tongue and groove with cleats on the inside face. There are numerous pedestrian entrance doors on the smelter, hoist house and machine shed. There are also sliding doors to each of the docks on the smelter and two (through which the ore cars move) on the sides of the hoist house.

   b. Windows, shutters: In general the windows are six light awning with the northwest side and southeast side of the smelter having six-over-six light double-hung sash.

7. Roof:

   a. Shape, covering: The conveyor roof is flat with asphalt rolled roofing and timbers over at approximately eight feet on center. All other roofs are gable roofs with asphalt rolled roofing on the hoist house and corrugated iron on the machine shed and smelter.

   b. Cornice, eaves: The smelter has a simple boxed cornice with a 12 inch overhang.

   c. Towers: There is a heavy timber frame pulley tower on the northwest front of the hoist house (adjacent to the machine shed).

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

   a. Machine shed: The interior is primarily one large room with storage rooms on the north corner (one) and along the southwest side (three).

   b. Hoist house: There is primarily one large room with a storage room at the southeast (rear).

c. Conveyor shed: There is one long continuous space with a machine room at the midpoint. The conveyor rises from the hoist house to the machine room and then descends to the smelter. This is to move the ore over a hill which is located between the hoist house and the smelter.

d. Smelter: The room at the highest elevation (northeast side) is where the ore arrives from the hoist house via conveyor. There are three elongated rooms at descending levels to the southwest (long dimension NW to SE) where the smelting operation takes place. There is a small enclosed shed along the northwest wall of the highest of these three levels which appears to have been a laboratory.

2. Stairways: There are numerous steps of 2 foot dimensioned lumber which connect the various levels of the smelter and other platforms located throughout the interior.

3. Flooring: While there are a few isolated locations with wooden floor planks, most of the flooring is exposed dirt.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: All wall and ceiling surfaces are the unfinished interior surfaces of the exterior materials.

5. Doorways and doors: Tongue and groove wooden doors with cleats.

6. Notable hardware: None.

7. Mechanical equipment: Extensive remnants of equipment necessary to the functions of the individual buildings.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located on a hill approximately one mile north of South Pass City, the buildings are oriented with their sides at 45 degrees to the compass points.

2. Outbuildings: There are numerous cabins, sheds, privies and storage tanks located on the site, primarily to the southeast and southwest. There is one new structure located immediately to the northeast of the machine shed which is a restaurant and is named the "Hoist House."

Prepared by J. William Rudd, Architect
Project Supervisor
National Park Service
Summer, 1973

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1973 Wyoming Project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Wyoming Recreation Commission. During the project, records were made on twenty-eight (28) individual subjects and six (6) historic areas.

This project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was Professor J. William Rudd, Architect, of the University of Cincinnati. Project Historian was John Paige, Oklahoma State University. The measured drawings were prepared by John Uhlir, University of California at Berkeley, Architect; and Student Assistant Architects Richard Duflocq, University of Cincinnati, Clayton Fraser, University of Tennessee, and Richard Wyatt, California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, provided the photographic record. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.